

White House Mum on Ransom \$

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By MICHAEL O'NEILL

Washington, Oct. 10 (News Bureau).—Sen. John J. Williams (R-Del.) demanded today that President Kennedy confirm or deny reports that the government is secretly supplying some of the ransom for the Cuban invasion prisoners. But the White House kept mum.

Diplomatic sources reported meanwhile that most of the \$17 million in cash reportedly earmarked for the deal is slated to go for medicines and medical supplies, which Fidel Castro desperately needs.

Williams told the Senate that he was disturbed by reports that government money was involved and said they should be denied immediately if untrue.

Knows of No Request

Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) countered that he knew of no request to Congress for any ransom funds.

The Administration maintained silence in line with its position that the whole operation is a private deal between New York attorney James B. Donovan and the Castro regime.

A White House spokesman specifically gave a "no comment" to

all questions on the government's reported involvement.

A Justice Department spokesman opened up enough merely to deny reports that Donovan was strictly a White House agent.

No Exact Figures

The exact total and nature of the ransom has been kept secret. But persistent behind-the-scenes reports were that it involves some \$15 to \$17 million in cash that was probably being supplied clandestinely by the U. S. government.

Diplomatic sources said that besides medicines and medical supplies some food and clothing might also be involved. The use of surplus government food, however, apparently has been ruled out to eliminate direct and official federal involvement in the deal.

As the operation was reported today, little if any hard cash would be delivered to the Cuban premier. The emphasis on medicine would accent the humanitarian aspect of the exchange and in the Administration's view, make an admittedly messy operation more palatable politically and otherwise.

Reports are that Cuba is in a

bad way medically. More than half of its doctors have fled the country—most to Florida. Hospitals and laboratories are in extremely short supply. The country's per capita daily diet was reported to have skidded 25% in three years.